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# MEETING AN EMERGENCY

Fire



Broad Street Station Fire at Its Height, 2 A. M., June 11, 1923—PENNSYLVANIA RAILROAD, PHILADELPHIA





Broad Street Station trainshed as it was, 1892 to 1923. The Station was originally built in 1881 and was greatly enlarged eleven years later, making it the largest passenger terminal in the world at that time. The trainshed measured 600 feet in length and nearly 300 feet in width, containing sixteen tracks.



Flames fast reducing the historic structure to ruins. Looking east along Market Street, with City Hall Tower as a background. The torrents of water poured into the flames flooded the Rapid Transit subway beneath Market Street and threatened for a time to stop its service.



# Meeting an Emergency

**S**HORTLY before one o'clock on the morning of Monday, June 11, 1923, fire broke out under one of the platforms beneath the vast trainshed of Broad Street Station, Philadelphia. The flames spread with incredible rapidity, and within a few hours the structure, with its sixteen stub-end terminal tracks, nearly two miles in total length, was reduced to ruins.

The fire, though brought under control at about noon, continued to burn more than two days. It was the most serious in Philadelphia for many years. Practically the City's entire fire-fighting force, with all available apparatus, was rushed to the scene.

Broad Street Station is the center of the heaviest passenger traffic of the Pennsylvania Railroad System. It is one of the three or four busiest passenger stations in the country, and ranks among the most important in the world. It accommodates each day 530 inbound and outbound trains, requiring 2217 distinct train and engine movements through the approach tracks. Over 80,000 passengers are brought in and out of the station daily, including a very large proportion of the City's commuting population.

Threatened stoppage of this vast traffic created an emergency of the first magnitude. The swiftest possible planning, immediate execution, perfect co-operation and absolute loyalty to duty on the part of all concerned were required to deal with the situation and avert disastrous confusion.

Long before the fire had even gained full headway, arrangements were perfected to take care of the incoming morning trains at the Company's other principal City stations—West and North Philadelphia—and to dispatch the outgoing trains from these stations and the West Philadelphia Produce Freight Yard.

So well did this work out that 100 per cent. of the day's arriving trains were taken care of, with a minimum of inconvenience, and over 95 per cent. of the outbound service was operated from the stations named as dispatching points. The day following the fire every scheduled train, in and out of the City, was operated.

Not a single movement of sleeping cars or through trains was annulled at any time. In reality, the only curtailment of service at all resulted from the doubling up of a few outbound locals during the early morning hours on the day of the fire.

Before daylight, and while the fire was still at its height, the building of temporary facilities was started

to bring back the commuting trains to the center of the City as quickly as possible. These consisted of platforms, with wooden stairways to the street, from both sides of the elevated tracks. They were located a block beyond the outer end of the trainshed, to be out of reach of the heat and flames. Thirty-eight electric trains were operated to and from this temporary station on the day of the fire. The next day it was used by 142 electric trains.

Meanwhile, as cooling permitted, the rebuilding of the platforms and tracks beneath the warped and twisted steel skeleton of the roof arches was begun. On Wednesday, June 13th, the first platform was completed from the outer end of the trainshed to the concourse gates. This permitted passengers again to use the station facilities, ticket offices, and regular exits and entrances. The full electric suburban service of 151 trains was brought to the outer end of the trainshed on that day.

On the following day, Thursday, June 14th, two tracks were completed all the way to the concourse gates. Progress thereafter was very rapid.

Seven working days after the fire started, and five after it was declared "out," all sixteen tracks had been fully rebuilt, the platform facilities completely restored, and approximately 70 per cent. of all trains brought back into the Station, the others continuing to be handled at West Philadelphia, owing to the necessity of using six of the sixteen tracks for the machinery required in taking down the ruined framework of the old trainshed.

The restoration work was done under the immediate charge of Superintendent H. H. Garrigues, of the Philadelphia Terminal Division. He was assisted by an official corps from his own and other Divisions. In addition to the fidelity and loyalty of the Company's own officers and employes, splendid assistance and co-operation were rendered by the City Government and the public utilities of the City, as well as by contractors and material dealers who offered their complete resources to the Railroad in the emergency. The Company's Management has warmly acknowledged its appreciation of this invaluable aid.

Materials used in the work of restoration included 2,000,000 feet of lumber, 100,000 pounds of nails, 200 tons of rails, 150,000 feet of electric light wiring, 15,000 feet of cable, 350,000 feet of telephone and telegraph wire, and 300 tons of pipe and fittings.



Fighting the flames between Station tracks. The heroic and efficient work of both the Fire and Police Departments of the City was warmly praised and commended in a special minute adopted by the Directors of the Pennsylvania Railroad Company.





Interior of the structure while still burning but with the flames under control. The steel cars in the picture passed through the hottest part of the fire with little damage except the destruction of glass, paint, and upholstery. Some of these cars were returned to service shortly afterward.



Exterior of train shed on the north side of the elevated tracks, showing the completeness of the destruction wrought within a few hours after the fire started. In the background, through the haze and smoke, is seen a portion of the tower of City Hall, about one block distant.



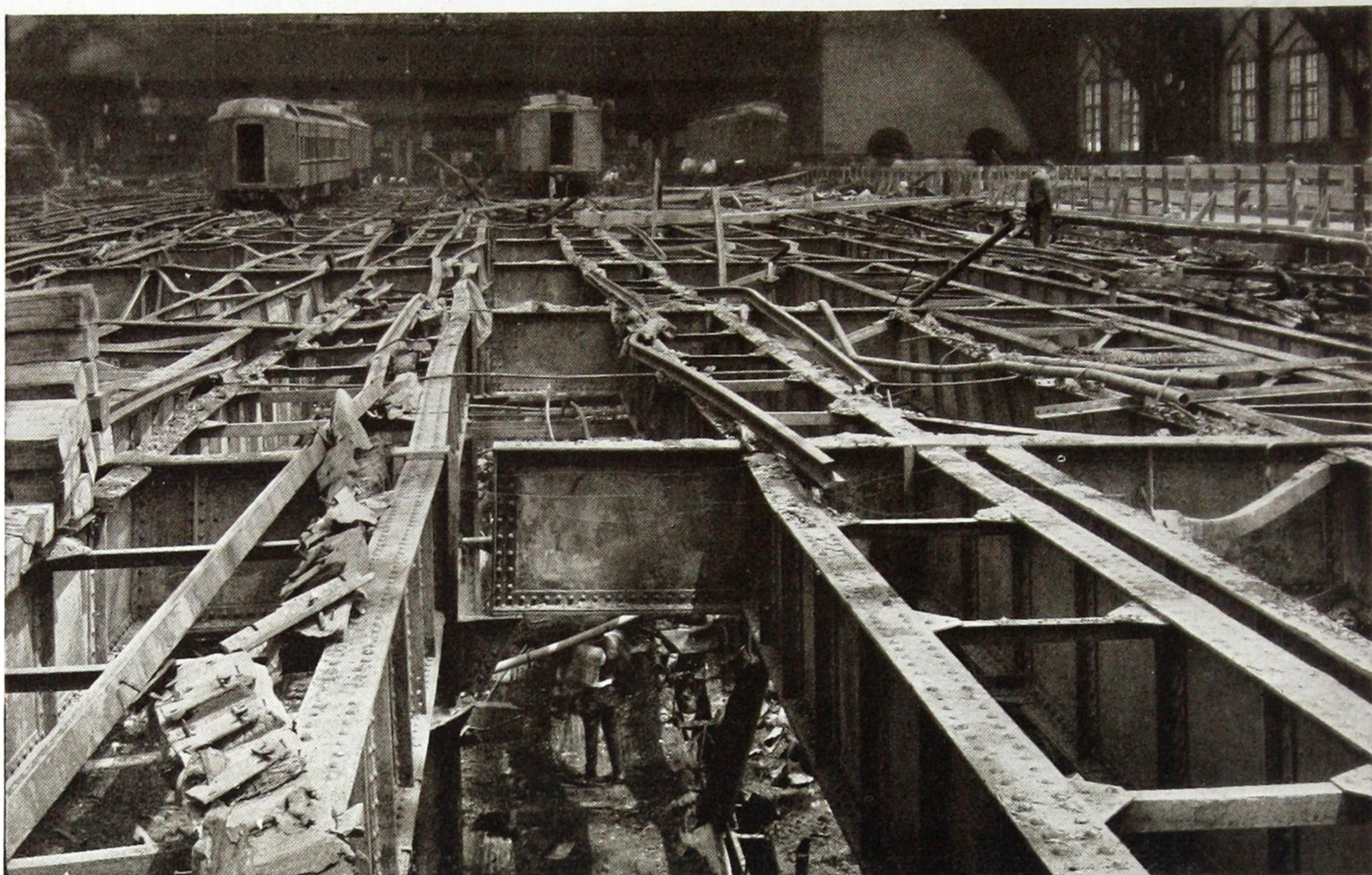


Repair work started beneath the great steel skeleton long before the flames were checked, and was well under way by daylight. The work trains shown in this picture were pushed up to the fire lines and reconstruction was actually carried on in the very midst of the still blazing wreckage.



One of the repair gangs is here shown working directly after the firemen. This was the rule of action from the start. It accounted, in large part, for the great rapidity with which the Station was restored to use after the practically total destruction of its track facilities and their supporting structure.



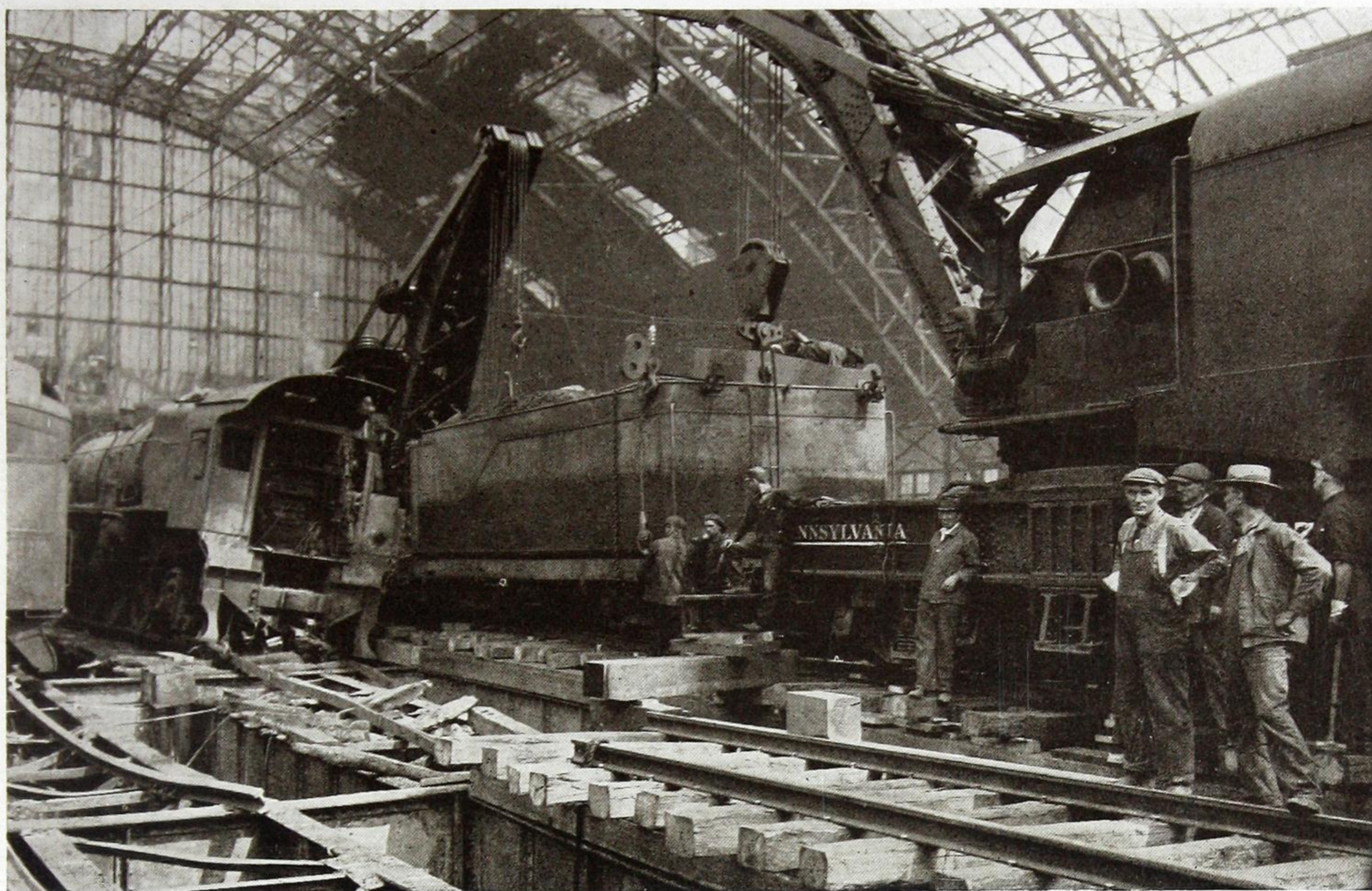


The devastation of the floor of the great trainshed was virtually complete, necessitating entire rebuilding of the nearly two miles of track which were beneath the steel arched roof. Between the warped girders, in the foreground, is seen the floor of the mail room at the street level, one story below the tracks.



One of the steel-car trains which were caught in the Station and went through the fire. After the ties burned away the rails collapsed and allowed the tender and car to drop part way between the supporting girders. This train proved an object of great interest to crowds of passengers.



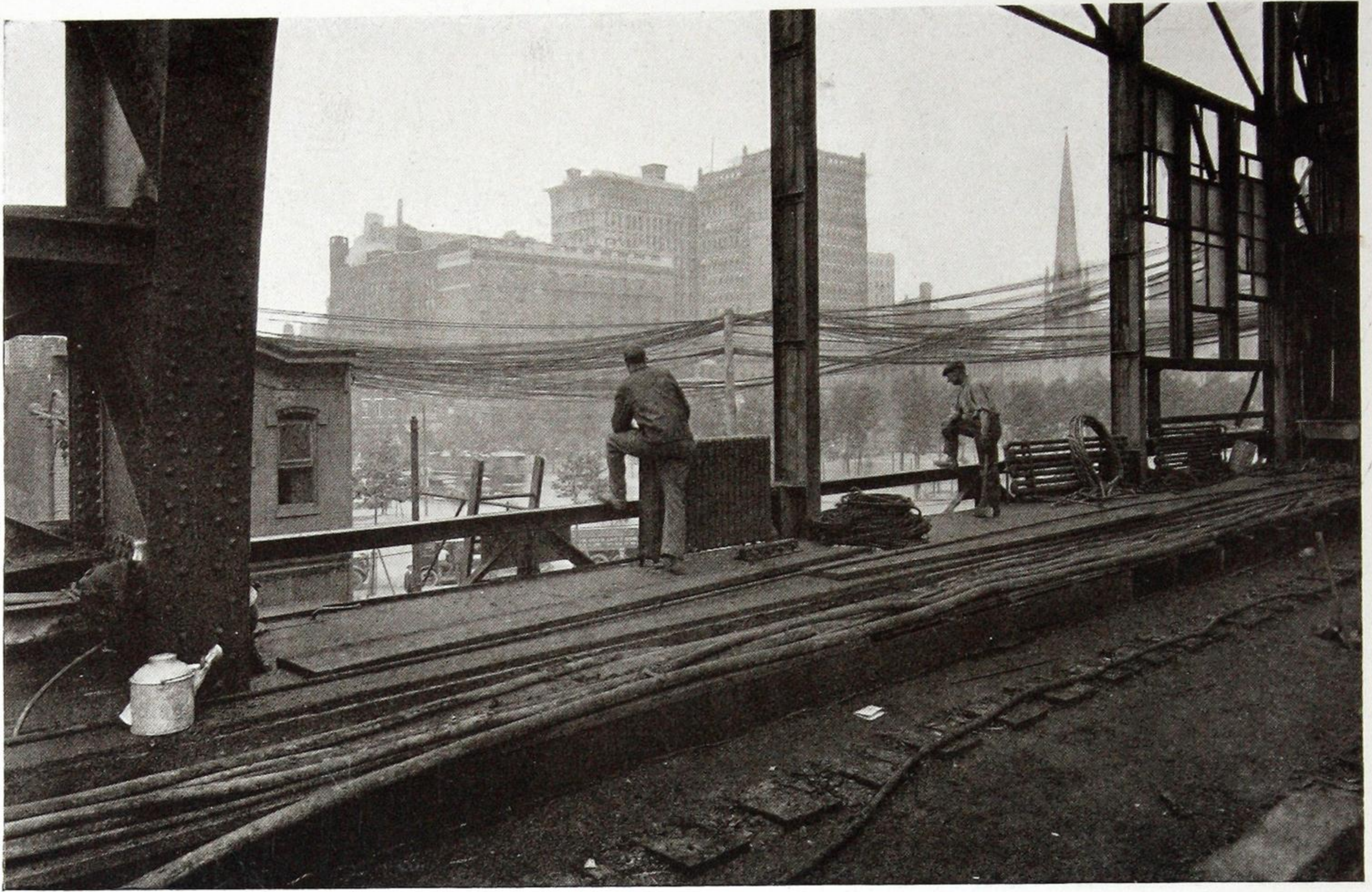


The removal of these cars and engines was one of the problems encountered. As the old trackage was completely destroyed, it was not possible to bring in the locomotive cranes and other wrecking apparatus until the work of rebuilding was considerably advanced.

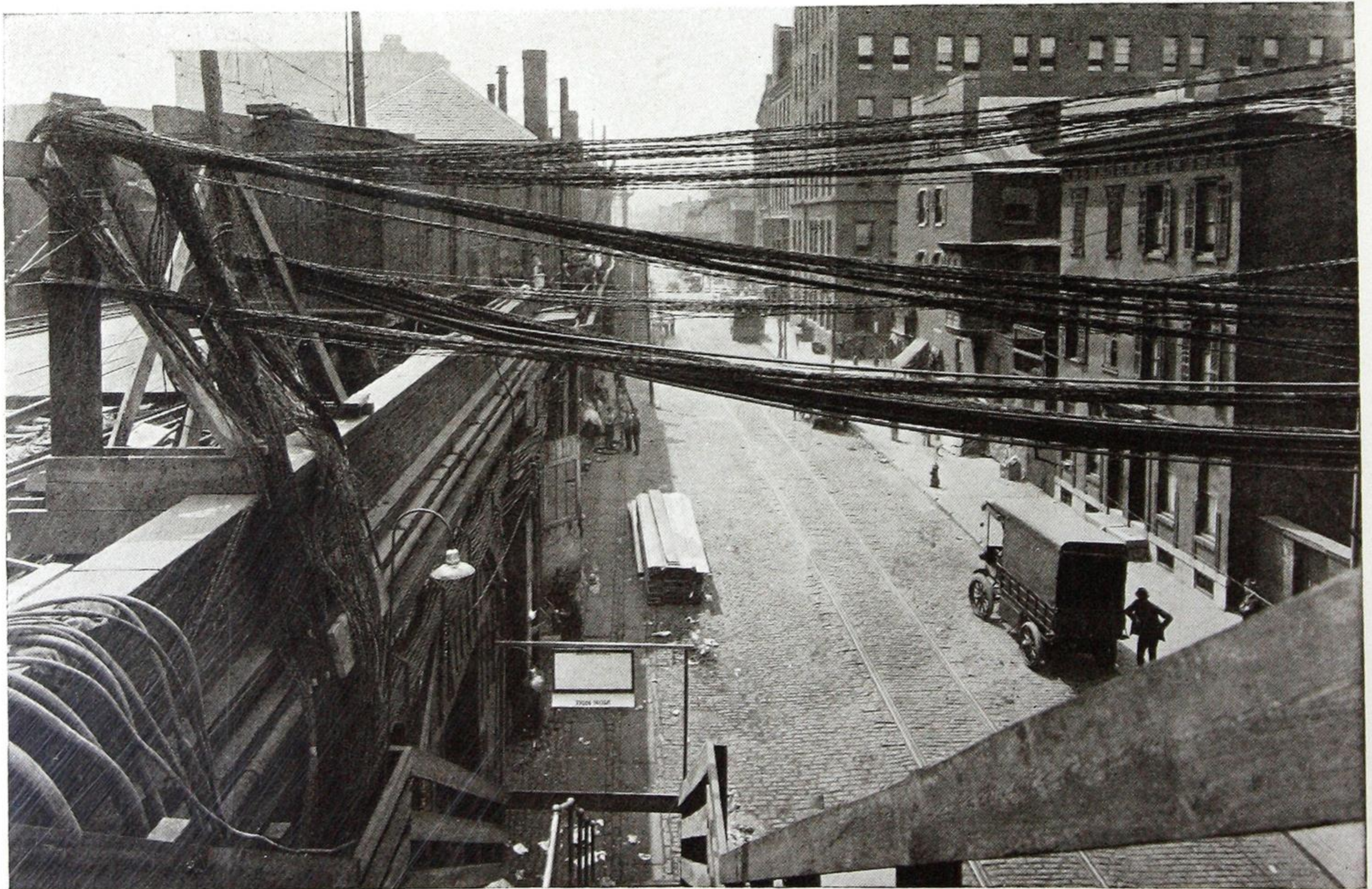


Locomotive crane picking up one of the steel passenger coaches after its baptism of fire. In view of the intense heat to which these cars were subjected, it was a matter of wonderment to thousands of persons who saw them that they showed so little evidence of injury.





Another serious problem was to restore as quickly as possible telephone and telegraph communication to and from the Company's executive offices. Long before daylight, on the morning of the fire, the most important circuits were re-established by a network of temporary wires over housetops.



Over 350,000 feet of temporary wiring were used to get the Company's telephone and telegraph circuits around the area of destruction. This picture shows a portion of the cables and wiring jumping to the housetops from the north side of the elevated tracks just beyond the trainshed.





Measures to bring back the commuting trains were among the very first taken. Temporary platforms, with stairways to the street, were built outside the burning trainshed beyond the heat. Thirty-eight electric trains operated to and from this point while the fire still burned.



As soon as the steel skeleton cooled sufficiently, trains were run to its outer end in order to utilize track platforms and umbrella shelters at this point. Travelers still continued to use the temporary stairways to the street level, walking back to that point from the shed entrance.





The reconstruction work, which began at the outer end of the shed while the fire was still burning, was pushed toward the gates of the Station concourse as rapidly as possible. This picture shows new material moving in, side by side with trains taking wreckage out.



The labors of rebuilding went forward twenty-four hours out of each day. Thousands of men worked in shifts under the great shed day and night. From sunset to sunrise hundreds of specially designed flood lights were employed, thus enabling the reconstruction to go on continuously.





On Wednesday morning, June 13th, only one working day after the extinguishment of the fire, passengers were again able to use the Station concourse and waiting rooms. This was accomplished by platforms constructed from the outer end of the shed to the train gates. The first platform is shown in use.



General view of the interior of the trainshed in the midst of the rebuilding activities. The first platform to be completed was on the north side of the Station (right hand of picture). Others in the center and to the left are shown in various stages of construction.



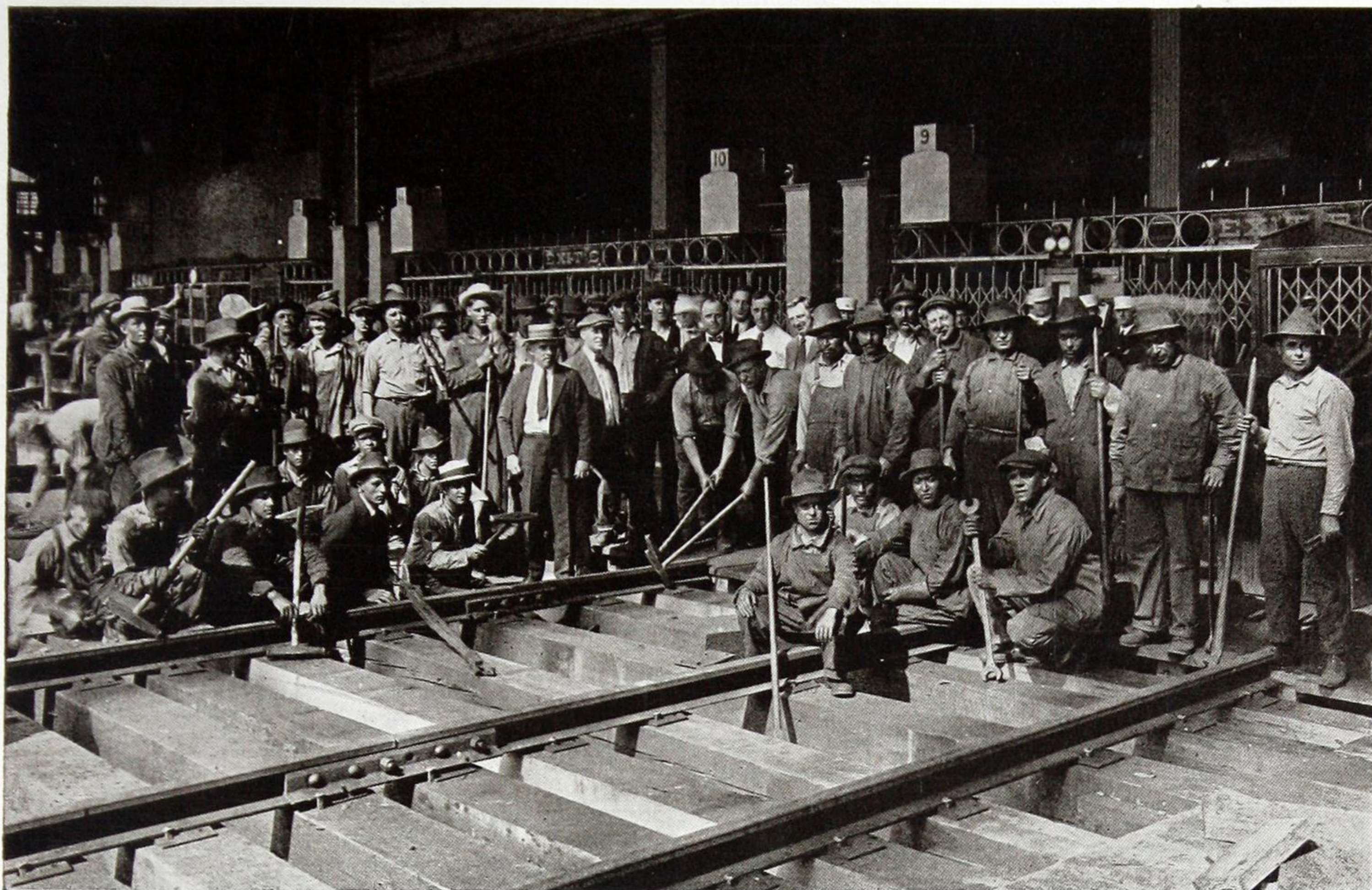


Repair work was well advanced when this picture was taken. The new platforms were practically finished and only a small amount of work remained to be done on track reconstruction. More than half of the normal train service was using the Station at this stage of the work.



Seven working days after the fire started and five working days after it was officially "out," all 16 tracks in the Station had been restored to use. Picked men were employed in the gang which rushed through the finishing touches. This picture shows the work a few hours before the finish.





Driving the last spike. When the 16th track was fully completed to the concourse gates the last spike was driven home with due ceremony. The honor of this work was assigned to Foreman John Radford and Assistant Foreman Frank Broderick, of Section 1, Philadelphia Terminal Division.



In this picture all sixteen tracks are shown fully restored to service. The entire floor, all platforms, track beds and tracks, together with the lighting and signal systems, were built anew from the concourse gates to the outer end of the shed, a distance of 600 feet.





Men who supervised the activities. Superintendent H. H. Garrigues, of the Philadelphia Terminal Division, was in general charge. He was assisted by a staff recruited from his own official and supervisory forces, as well as those of the Trenton, Atlantic, Maryland, Baltimore and New York Divisions and the General Offices.

FRONT ROW, LEFT TO RIGHT

J. M. Kinkead, Division Engineer, Trenton Division  
 R. J. Bond, Division Engineer, Atlantic Division  
 C. W. Thorn, Assistant Engineer, General Office  
 M. Lipman, Division Engineer, Philadelphia Terminal Division  
 J. G. Hopkins, Division Engineer, Baltimore Division  
 R. C. Miller, Division Engineer, Philadelphia Division  
 W. F. Miller, Division Engineer, Maryland Division  
 N. B. Pitcairn, Division Engineer, New York Division  
 H. H. Garrigues, Superintendent, Philadelphia Terminal Division  
 J. M. Jones, Pass'ng'r Trainmaster, Philadelphia Terminal Division  
 A. H. Mars, Assistant Trainmaster, Philadelphia Terminal Division  
 J. B. Diven, Master Mechanic, Philadelphia Terminal Division  
 W. Colledge, Road Foreman of Engines, Phila. Terminal Division  
 J. W. Wadsworth, Asst. Pass. Trainmaster, Phila. Term. Division  
 J. S. Baird, Asst. Pass. Trainmaster, Philadelphia Term. Division

SECOND ROW, LEFT TO RIGHT

L. C. Berger, Supervisor Buildings, Philadelphia Terminal Division  
 James Lose, Master Carpenter, Trenton Division  
 W. G. Kennedy, Master Carpenter, Maryland Division  
 E. F. McClintock, Master Carpenter, Atlantic Division  
 W. R. Gantz, Master Carpenter, Philadelphia Terminal Division  
 B. F. Stidfole, Master Carpenter, New York Division  
 Charles Lawrence, Acting Yardmaster, Phila. Terminal Division  
 M. S. Sammon, Acting Yardmaster, Phila. Terminal Division

H. K. LeSure, Chief Electrician, Phila. Terminal Division  
 J. S. Romig, Assistant Master Mechanic, Phila Terminal Division  
 George Mader, Inspector, General Office  
 G. S. Roberts, Shop Inspector, Philadelphia Terminal Division

THIRD ROW, LEFT TO RIGHT

J. I. Cassidy, Stenog. to Supt., Philadelphia Terminal Division  
 J. W. Brackin, Chief Clerk to Supt., Philadelphia Terminal Division  
 R. L. Deck, Lieutenant of Police, Philadelphia Terminal Division  
 F. A. Biberstein, Ticket Agt., Broad St., Phila. Terminal Division  
 Henry Brees, Lieutenant of Police, Philadelphia Terminal Division  
 J. A. Cuniff, Baggage Agent, Philadelphia Terminal Division  
 J. E. Heathcote, Lieutenant of Police, Phila. Terminal Division  
 W. R. Jones, Station Master, Philadelphia Terminal Division  
 D. E. Roberts, Lieutenant of Police, Philadelphia Terminal Division  
 Elwood Morgan, Asst. Station Master, Phila. Terminal Division  
 A. C. R. Seamens, Master Carpenter, Baltimore Division  
 H. F. D. Duncan, Asst. Station Master, Phila. Terminal Division  
 S. W. Neall, Asst. Station Master, Philadelphia Terminal Division  
 Elwood Green, Asst. Station Master, Philadelphia Terminal Division  
 E. Y. Jefferis, Asst. Station Master, Philadelphia Terminal Division  
 J. H. Hassenplug, Asst. Train Master, Phila. Terminal Division  
 C. G. Shuman, Inspector Train Service, Phila. Terminal Division  
 R. A. Hughes, Actg. Asst. Station Master, Phila. Terminal Division  
 John F. Smith, Lieutenant of Police, Philadelphia Terminal Division  
 William Collins, Lieutenant of Police, Phila. Terminal Division  
 G. D. Clymer, Inspector of Police, Phila. Terminal Division



One of the shifts of workmen, about to go on duty, was massed between new tracks and platforms for this picture.



Old Schedules  
at Broad Street  
within Ten Days

TRAFFIC CONDITIONS  
ARE NEARLY NORMAL

PENNSYLVANIA RAILROAD SHOWING EXPRESS SPEED IN REPAIRING FIRE DAMAGE  
workmen tearing away old trainshed span ruined by fire, while at right, another gang is at work repairing the tracks. The speed with which  
passengers in the fire-wrecked trainshed of the Broad Street Station, and in repairing the damage, shows the efficiency and resources which  
great American railroad that

Temporary Platform Built  
Filbert a

REGULAR SCHEDULE ONCE  
MORE BEING MAINTAINED

Clearing of Debris  
From Fire-wrecked  
Trainshed Rapidly  
Resum

at Very Edge of Huge  
Mass of Debris  
Traffic Is Resume

P. R. R. Adjusts Itself  
To the New Conditions  
Workers attacked the debris  
day afternoon with their  
sweat on their brows  
their picks and their  
hammers sang  
angled the bloo  
A do

Emergency Shelters  
Rushed Amid Huge  
Iron Ruins  
angle

BROAD ST. SCHEDULES  
SOON NEAR NORMAL  
TRAFFIC

MODERN MIRACLE OF RECONSTRUCTION  
BRING ORDER OUT OF CHAOS in the devast  
TIME DESPITE FIRE  
despite the chaotic conditions re  
from the big fire in Philadel  
ins from the east on the Penn  
on time last night  
Iron City exp  
the dela

#### PENNSYLVANIA EFFICIENCY

Prompt initiative and energy commensurate with the greatest railroad corporation in the world have been shown by the Pennsylvania in the marvelously rapid restoration of the Broad Street Station to public use.

Co-ordination of engineering skill and direction appear to have risen superior to an emergency that could scarcely have been foreseen. At a time when a shortage of both labor and materials for construction might have been supposed to hamper the operations, the Pennsylvania Railroad has been able to mobilize its resources in workmen and assemble enormous quantities of lumber, iron, steel, rails and miscellaneous supplies. Thereby the maximum of work is pushing night and day to the end that there may be a minimum of public inconvenience.—*Evening Bulletin*, Philadelphia, Pa.

#### THE PINCH

The fire engines were still pumping when in the Pennsy's Chestnut Street ticket office this sign appeared: "Broad Street Station Now Open." It was not even a printed sign. It was scrawled with crayon as part of the announcement of an emergency schedule of trains.

There were implications of valor in that short legend. It revealed again the American trait of assurance and self-control in any crisis.

—*Evening Public Ledger*, Philadelphia, Pa.

#### REBUILDERS

While the flames still burned and the smoke outpoured the surveyors and engineers were mobilizing for the reconstruction of the trainsheds. It was the spirit shown in wartime by those who refused to succumb to despair and mourn amid the ruins where the shells wrought havoc.

—*Public Ledger*, Philadelphia, Pa.

#### AN EXAMPLE OF EFFICIENCY

Would a government bureaucracy, bound with red tape, have been able to handle the emergency caused by the burning of Broad Street Station as the "Pennsy" handled it? is a question put by a newspaper across the river. The man in the street will answer in the negative.

—*Post-Telegram*, Camden, N. J.

#### SURVIVAL OF RAILROAD GENIUS

It is gratifying and encouraging to discover that there remains ability and willingness to serve the public despite all of the handicaps under which the modern railroad worker has to operate. Certainly the direction and performance of the men who have been on the job up at Broad Street Station during the past few days leave no doubt that there are in the ranks of the Pennsylvania of this day men who can do big things.

—*Record*, Philadelphia, Pa.

#### AN OBJECT LESSON IN RAILROAD EFFICIENCY

The word efficiency has been greatly overworked in recent years, but it can be applied in all justice to the officials of the Pennsylvania Railroad who are meeting the emergency produced by the destruction of the trainshed of the Broad Street Station.

While the conflagration was still in progress heads of the engineering and construction departments were in consultation, and the fire had not been extinguished before numerous wrecking crews were at work.

The American spirit is shown at its best when meeting seemingly unsurmountable difficulties. Say that a thing is impossible in this country and, as if by magic, men will appear to make it possible. Those who travel may be subject to some temporary inconvenience, but if the public be as patient as the railroad company has been enterprising, there will not be much reason for complaint.—*Inquirer*, Philadelphia, Pa.

#### BET ON BRAINS IN AN EMERGENCY

Probably the most remarkable feat of handling traffic ever witnessed in the East was seen at Broad Street Station, following the million dollar fire Monday morning.

Yet while the trainsheds were burning railroad executives were planning for the immediate future and actually handling a big share of the traffic that ordinarily would use Broad Street as a terminal. Within twenty-four hours train schedules had been revised and commuters were being delayed only a few minutes.—*Daily Courier*, Camden, N. J.

#### PENNSY'S QUICK WORK IN PROVIDING NEW TRAINSHED AFTER BIG BLAZE

Workmen are shown building temporary stairway at Seventeenth and M...  
moving train and walking across improvised platf...  
Pennsylvania's quick work in...

ALL 16 TRACKS AT BROAD ST.  
STATION IN USE WEDNESDAY

Fifty-second Street—No Delay  
going or coming of the Mails

with the exception of trolley service  
street, between Fifteenth and  
streets... traffic conditions  
into confusion by  
Station trainshed

as was the case  
streday  
firemen fought the flame  
more than a hundred police  
lined the streets of Bro

Sixteen  
hours y  
minat  
ad  
mi  
it

Used at Once for Su  
Traffic—Later to

TEMPORARY STATION IS  
BUILT AT 17TH STREET

N. Y. Hourly Expresses to  
Resume; 10 of 14 Tracks

in Use

STATION

SERVICE TODAY TO BE

54 PER CENT NORMAL

PENNSYLVANIA TRAINS  
MAKING SCHEDULE TIME

PHILADELPHIA, June 12.—The  
Pennsylvania railroad is running  
schedule time despite the dis  
struction which destroyed  
more than 1,000,000  
just

are of passengers  
while at left are oth  
trainshed, is a trill

Platforms in West an  
going or coming of the Mails



